

**Written Testimony of Hilary Atkin
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Programs
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**Hearing before the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs titled “Examining
Housing Needs in Native Communities”
Wednesday, September 16th, 2026**

Thank you, Chairwoman Murkowski, Vice Chairman Schatz, and Members of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs, for this opportunity to testify on the housing needs in Native communities. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Committee’s staff, not only for coordinating this hearing, but for their ongoing engagement with HUD staff on issues that impact Native American communities across our Nation.

As the Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Native American Programs, I have had the privilege of meeting with Tribal leaders from across Indian Country, both in their communities and here in Washington D.C., to learn firsthand about the housing challenges they face and the innovative solutions they are developing. Serving as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary has also given me the opportunity to hear directly from Tribal leaders about what we need to do to strengthen and improve HUD’s programs so that they better support housing opportunities and economic advancement in Tribal communities.

Native American communities continue to face severe overcrowding, a shortage of affordable housing, and inadequate infrastructure. These compounding factors create significant barriers to prosperity and self-sufficiency. At the same time, we are seeing some of the most innovative housing strategies and developments happening in Tribal communities today. HUD recognizes the solemn duty to uphold the federal government’s Treaty Trust responsibility to Tribes. Our staff at HUD work tirelessly alongside our Tribal partners to find practical solutions and overcome obstacles, while also promoting successful practices that so many Tribes have employed to support their people.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (NAHASDA). Over the past three decades, NAHASDA has helped build, acquire, and rehabilitate more than 160,000 homes in Indian country, while furthering Tribal sovereignty and Tribal self-determination. By recognizing the unique government-to-government relationship between the Federal Government and Tribal Nations, NAHASDA has enabled Tribes and HUD to work together to address longstanding housing barriers and economic stability.

NAHASDA's flexible, locally driven model has built new and preserved existing housing stock across Indian Country. From remote Alaska native villages to Southwest Pueblo communities to the timberlands of the East and Pacific Northwest and the Tribal Nations of the plains, NAHASDA has continued to help HUD carry out its mission and uphold the Federal government's Trust responsibility. Moreover, the housing needs of the 575 federally recognized Tribes vary significantly across geographic, economic, and cultural traditions, and Tribes are best positioned to develop solutions that reflect the unique circumstances of their communities.

NAHASDA provides a flexible framework to design and implement housing programs tailored to those local needs.

The reauthorization and modernization of NAHASDA represents an important opportunity to work towards the goals of strengthening the relationship between the Federal Government and Tribal Nations by streamlining requirements, updating programs, and strengthening Tribal self-determination in housing. Secretary Turner remains committed to working with Tribal Nations to expand housing opportunities in Indian Country, consistent with its trust responsibilities and statutory authorities.

HUD appreciates the Committee's efforts and looks forward to continue working with the Committee to refine and strengthen this legislation. HUD remains committed to working alongside Tribal Nations to ensure that families across Indian Country have access to safe, affordable, and stable housing for generations to come.

Thank you again for this opportunity to appear before you today.